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WHO WERE THE HESSIANS

CAMPING ROUND HERE?

MR. KEIM TELLS ALL ABOUT THEM—2000 OF THEM IN ALL—MANY WORKED FOR FARMERS IN OLEY AND ALSACE—A HIESTER ON BOTH SIDES.

Now that the Daughters of the American Revolution are planning to erect a tablet to commemorate the spot where the Hessians camped, DeB. Randolph Keim has gone delving into history and prepared a very interesting paper for The Herald, telling just who those Hessians were. He writes:

A press editorial alluding to the recent Washington's Birthday competition for the D. A. R. gold piece by students of the Girls' High School of Reading suggested, while "The Hessian Camp" is familiar by name, very few know how it originated. The literature of the Hessians in America in German, official and personal form is voluminous and interesting.

It seems a duty of our Berks County Chapter to supply this absence of information concerning one of our most interesting localities associated with the military operations of the War of Independence. For that reason the following [illegible] mostly from original German data, has been assembled.

BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER.

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Lotz and Peter Kachlein, which gave American Revolutionary history that in their first battle on American soil, the Hessian mercenaries of the Royal Army of King George were confronted by their patriotic former countrymen in the Continental Army of General Washington. Also the earliest and later Hessian prisoners taken in battle were sent to the German-American town of Reading, Pa., for safeguard until exchanged, which gave origin to the "Hessian Camp" on the picturesque mountain side east of our city. Still another coincidence is that the guard placed over them was composed of men by birth or immediate descent, language, religion, habits and customs, principally of the same race.

On a mid-August day of 1776 the first division of Hessians, 8000 strong, commanded by Lieutenant-General Philip Von Hiester, entered Sandy Hook and landed upon Staten Island amid the wildest demonstrations of cannon, musketry, ruffle of drums and shouts of welcome by the British army under General Howe.

GERMANS SAVED ENGLISH.

This timely arrival very likely saved the English, who had been driven out of Boston, from defeat, as they now had 25,000 to 30,000 regular troops of both nationalities and of all arms, against Washington's 12,000, chiefly militia and without experience in battle.

On August 22 the British and Hessian armies crossed the Narrows, landed on Long Island and advanced at once into action in the vicinity of Brooklyn, the Hessian Chasseurs and Grenadiers under Von Donop in advance.

It is not necessary to the purpose of this narrative to go into details of this first contact of arms. A very entertaining eye-witness account is preserved in the diary of "A Hessian Officer," printed the following year in Frankford-on-the-Main, Germany, of the beautiful country through which the army marched; the fine farms and houses, cultivated fields, evidences of prosperity everywhere and a thrifty people, in his opinion "Jackanapes and fools" for fighting a sovereign whose rule had made such signs of comfort and former contentment possible. No doubt the conditions were quite in contrast to what the diarist had left at home.

AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

The same authority and others later thought the Americans were good fighters and very superior marksmen to the Hessians' sorrow. They expected to walk over them as soldiers.

In the course of this first battle the Hessians ran against two battalions of county militia under Nicholas

Lotz and Peter Kachlein, which gave them such strong resistance as to drive them to the conclusion that fighting in America would not be a "pickenick" nor a "Schutzenfest."

In the battle of Long Island, which occurred Aug. 22, 1776, about six weeks after the Declaration of Independence, the obstinate resistance of the Berks County German Militia gave Washington one of his best chances of saving his army by crossing to New York when he discovered that the British were in force more than two to one. As a result of their obstinate stand the Lotz and Kachlein Berks-German Battalions were taken prisoners. Among the officers captured were Lieut. Cols. Lotz and Kachlein, Major Edward Burd, Captains Jacob Graul, Joseph Hiester and Jacob Mauser, all Germans except Burd. But Washington had made good his retreat so the result justified the sacrifice. It was an interesting incident that a Hessian Hiester commanded the Mercenaries and an American Hiester one of the resisting German companies.

30,000 HIRED SOLDIERS.

And now let us record a little history. The number of German Mercenaries and recruits sent to America 1776-83 was nearly 30,000 divided among German principalities:

Hesse Cassel	16,992
Brunswick	5,723
Hesse Hanau	2,422
Anspach-Beyreuth	2,353
Waldeck	1,225
Anhalt-Zerbst	1,160
Total	29,875

Of this number 18,000 sailed for America in 1776, the first year of the revolution. Of these 7,313 returned to Germany at the close of war, and 12,562 remained in the States. Of the latter 1,200 were killed, 6,354 died of wounds, sickness or accident and 5,008 deserted.

Not a few of the latter settled in Berks and became useful citizens of the young Republic.

It may be enquired how did their employment come about. The sale of men for military purposes was a business with some of the German princes in that day. What was known in a general sense as Germany in 1776 resembled a political crazy quilt made of about 300 principalities, electorates, Bishoprics, free cities and about 1400 quasi-independent Knights of the Empire. Some of these petty states were not as large as Berks county and one at least not 1-3 the size of Reading in population.

OTHERS DID THEIR FIGHTING.

It is a curious fact in most wars in which England was engaged with civilized nations, fighting was largely done by others. It is one of the incidents of Waterloo that Wellington was so near capture by Napoleon as to pray aloud that night and Blucher (commanding the Germans) might come. He saved the day.

In 1775 England made great efforts to secure the services of 20,000 soldiers from Russia which was declined. Some of the petty Princes of Germany offered theirs. Frederick the Great discountenanced the whole business and put obstacles in the way of the hired troops crossing his territories in order to reach the seaboard. It was said the Prince of Waldeck kept a stock farm to raise men for the Dutch military market and sent 1225 to America as a side speculation. The Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst had but 420,000 subjects and yet could spare for sale near 1200 for America. He was brother of the famous Catherine II, of Russia, who had a friendly leaning towards the fighting colonists.

WELL-PAID FOR HIRELINGS.

The landgrave of Hesse Cassel spared nearly 17,000 out of a population of 300,000. The count of Hesse Hanau, son of the last named, received a subsidy of 92,000 pounds, about $477,-120, present money a year for his contingent of about 2500.

The Duke of Brunswick-Luneberg from his 150,000 subjects sold nearly 6000, pocketing 160,000 pounds or $777,-600 from the bargain.

The Margrave of Beyreuth, out of a population of 400,000, sold 2353, realizing for them 100,000 pounds, about $486,000. It should be mentioned that the policy of the empire was opposed to this solicitation of blood money, but it could not be prevented. Prussia in the North and Austria in the Southeast were opposed to it, but the petty governments had their own way.

In 1743 happened the curious condition of King George II of England, having in his employ 6000 Hessians fighting against an equal number in the opposing army of the Emperor Charles VII.

FOUGHT IN MANY WARS.

About a half century earlier a number of these Germans were in the paid service of Venice fighting the Turks. In 1702. 9000 were employed in the wars of the Maritime powers and four years later 11,500 were fighting in Italy. The treaties for the employment of the Hessians before Parliament met with much open criticism, but the King and his ministry were not to be moved.

The Brunswickers were the first to

set off. Curiously their sailing from Stade, near the mouth of the Elbe, took place on the 44th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, Feb. 22, 1776. These landed on Staten Island. Others followed landing at New York and some at Quebec, who served and surrendered under Burgoyne.

In gross England paid upward 1,770-000 pounds sterling, $8,602,200, for the services of the Hessians in America in levy money and subsidies paid to the German princes in addition to the pay of the soldiers. This with the cost of supply and fighting material must have aggregated more than again as much probably in all not far from $20,000,000. As a rule the Hessians were good soldiers from the European standard. The Brunsweichers were particularly noted at home.

DESERTED TO OUR ARMY.

A number who had deserted from the Hessian colors were anxious to enlist in the Continental Army, but Washington was decidedly opposed to their enrollment. No objection was made to their becoming citizens. It is known some of them did get into Pulaski's famous legion composed largely of Pennsylvania Germans. Weiderhold, a Hessian captain in captivity at Reading early in 1780, mentions in his journal two squadrons of Armends mounted Corps, numbering 400 strong, passing through that town, practically all German deserters.

The Hessians played a prominent part in all the principal campaigns of the British during the war with the Colonies and met with proportionately heavier losses. In running over the list of battles in which they were engaged, we find Long Island and operations around New York where they lost many men. In the storming of Fort Washington they sustained 56 killed and 78 wounded. At Trenton 17 killed and 78 wounded, besides 1,000 prisoners, a portion of whom were sent to Reading for safe-keeping, and also in action at Bissinpink, Jan. 1777.

SAVED HESSIAN COLORS.

In the Burgoyne campaign Sept.-Oct., 1777, culminating in the Saratoga surrender, Von Riedesal commanded the Hessians and Baroness von Riedesel with her three little girls passed through all its perils and hardships. After the surrender by means of a woman's shrewdness, the baroness secreted and saved the Hessian colors, although those of the English were captured.

She also left [illegible] of that campaign in America

Baum lost 365. It was upon this occasion that Col. Stark, who had rallied the surrounding farmers, said: "We'll whip those Hessians before night or Molly Stark's a widow." He not only killed Baum and killed and wounded many men, but bagged this part of the outfit besides killing and wounding 231 of Breyman's Hessians hastening to his relief. The Hessian loss at Saratoga was 190 killed, 378 wounded and 2431 taken prisoners.

The whole British army surrendered numbered 5791. The total German loss in the Mohawk Valley at Bennington and Saratoga in killed, wounded and missing was 1122, besides the surrendered men. Some of the Hessians from Saratoga were held at Reading until exchanged. In the Brandywine, capture of Philadelphia and Germantown campaign of the fall of 1777 of Howe's 18,000 in the field 4500 were Germans under Knyphausen.

WOULD GIVE NO QUARTER.

At Red Bank, below Philadelphia, on the Jersey side, the Hessians discovered the fighting metal of which Continentals were made. In October, 1777, Count Von Donop, a young Hessian officer of promise, with three battalians of Grenadiers, four companies of Chasseurs and eight guns, marched to the capture of that fort. Van Donop sent summons to surrender, announcing to the American commander that if declined no quarter would be given. The American replied: "We will fight it out on that issue."

When Von Donop was taken several American soldiers clamored to give him

(Continued on Seventh Page.)

what he had threatened, although death from his wound was certain. "Yes," said Donop, "that was the wager. I am in your hands and ready to accept the penalty of my life."

The soldiers, standing with bayonets fixed, were ready to hurl back the murderous threat of the dying Hessian. Through the intercession of officers they desisted. Among them seeing a young officer, Van Donop exclaimed: "You seem not to be an American." "No, I am a Frenchman (Du Plessis), in the Continental service." Throwing his arms about him, Von Donop exclaimed: "Thank God I die in the embrace of honor."

With the words of ingratitude for his spared life upon his lips Von Donop expired. Hessians also fought at Newport, R. [illegible] killed and 96 wounded. In June, [illegible]on with a large detachment [illegible]adiers and Chasseurs sailed [illegible]or the South. They fought

with heavy losses in proportion of the force engaged at Stone Ferry, Charleston, Springfield and Guilford Court House and Green Spring.

THEIR LOSSES WERE BIG.

The traitor Arnold had 100 Hessians in his Virginia expedition. At the finish of their fighting in America, at Yorktown, according to German accounts, they lost, killed, 53; wounded, 131; missing, 27, not counting the officers and men surrendered. Also 10 English and 18 Hessian regimental standards taken.

The American accounts place the Hessians at 1924 out of 7251 officers and men of Cornwallis' army surrendered at Yorktown.

The Hessians were not used exclusively to fight Americans. In 1778, 1200 Waldeckers and English were detached to strengthen the garrisons in West Florida. The following year three companies of the same Hessians were sent on an unsuccessful expedition against the Spaniards at Baton-Rouge, Louisiana.

The total losses of the Hessians in battle were, killed 548, wounded 1652, missing 127 in addition to those taken prisoners.

Aggregately at different times through the war approximately 2000 or more Hessians were held prisoners at the Hessians' Camp at Reading. It was not unusual for prisoners to be permitted to work for farmers of Alsace, Oley, etc. It is not likely many of these tilled any more German soil.

The Declaration of Independence made special allusion to the British Government "at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny already begun," etc.

INDUCEMENTS TO DESERT.

It is evident that the Hessians were not despised as men, although they were in their attitude of mercenaries for which they were not responsible. The Continental Congress made special efforts to induce them to desert. In April, 1778, a proclamation was circulated among them offering 50 acres to every soldier and to any captain with 40 men, 800 acres and cattle and hogs to stock them if they would desert and were not to be required to do military duty.

A great deal has been said by writers prejudiced or unfamiliar with the subject to cast doubt upon the attitude of Frederick the Great. A letter of his is in existence dated June 18, 1776, to Veltaire, in which the warrior king expresses contempt for the "Men-selling" princes of German blood, and would throw every impediment in their way. The celebrated German poet Schiller in his tragedy of Cabale und Liebe, written during the time the Hessians were in the English service in America, introduced a protest against the traffic.

NOT AS BAD AS PAINTED.

Interesting occurrences associated with Hessian prison life on Mt. Penn might be narrated from their own journals. I might go back to departure from their home land, portray the agonies of separation from parents, wives, children and friends when they bade their last farewell. How driven like beasts they were scourged by orders of their princes on the march to point of embarkation and the cruelties practiced upon those who uselessly attempted to resist.

This side of the portraiture shows that the Hessian soldier in every instance was not as bad as he is now painted.

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